

# Iowa Afterschool Alliance Issue Brief

## Afterschool Programs

### Keep Kids Safe

This issue brief is the second in a series developed by the Iowa Afterschool Alliance. Each issue brief is designed to educate policymakers about important issues relating to Iowa's afterschool programs in an effort to encourage well-informed policies for those programs. Please note, however, that the views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the organizations employing the Alliance members.



### Who is Supervising Kids After School in Iowa?

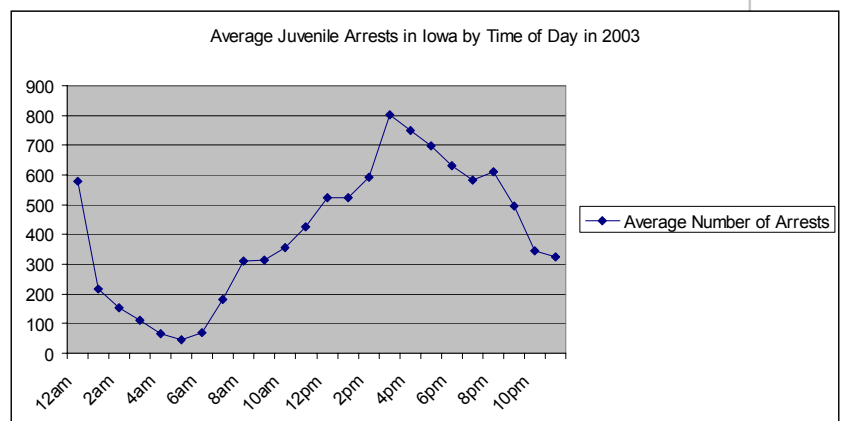
Afterschool programs provide safe places for youth after school, in addition to supporting student learning and helping working families. Research has shown that participation in afterschool programs helps students develop academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. But these programs also provide youth a safe, supervised environment that reduces their risk of committing or becoming a victim of violent crime.

A recent report from *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* has found that violent juvenile crime is most likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., and that youth are more likely to smoke, drink or do drugs during these hours. Afterschool programs promote safety by preventing youth violence, providing safe places for kids to stay after school and educating youth about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

### Between the Hours of 3:00 and 6:00 PM

Since Iowa is ranked second in the nation as having the most families with both parents (or the sole parent) in the workforce, we cannot afford to ignore the question of what Iowa's youth are doing from the time school is dismissed until their parents return from work (Children's Defense Fund, 2003). According to the America After 3 PM survey, about 29% of Iowa's K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. This can be a dangerous situation.

- *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* found the chances an Iowa youth will become a victim of violent crime more than triples between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- In a survey of American teens, the YMCA of the USA found that youth who are unsupervised after school are three times more likely to use drugs than their peers who are supervised.



Iowa's children and youth are not immune to the dangers of unsupervised activity after school. Data from the Iowa Department of Public Safety's Uniform Crime Reporting System show that juvenile arrests peak at 3 p.m.

## Law Enforcement Supports Afterschool

Investments in afterschool programs as crime prevention measures have been endorsed by national and local law enforcement associations including the Iowa Police Executive Forum, the Iowa State Sheriffs' and Deputies' Association, the Iowa County Attorneys Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, the International Association of Police, and the National District Attorneys Association.

At a *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids* event in Iowa, Des Moines Police Chief Bill McCarthy asked, "Will Congress continue to entrust millions of kids to the afterschool teachings of Jerry Springer and violent video games? Or will it invest in afterschool programs proven to teach kids the values and skills they need to succeed in school and life?" Dallas County Attorney Wayne Reisetter added that quality afterschool programs are proven to cut youth crime and reduce risky behavior.

## Who Will Invest in Afterschool Programs for Iowa's Youth?

According to the Afterschool Alliance, nearly 35,600 of Iowa's youth participate in programs supported by the US Department of Education's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC). Because of changes to the federal funding eligibility requirements, Iowa is receiving far fewer 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants than when it fared much better under a competitive grant process. According to the National School Boards Association, in 2001 alone, 40 Iowa communities who applied for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants did not receive funding. Those applications represent a potential \$272 million investment in Iowa's kids and could provide roughly 56,000 additional kids safe, stimulating afterschool programs. Iowa has already begun to lose afterschool programs due to lack of funds and stands to lose more if other funding sources are not identified.

## Summary

Afterschool programs offer children and youth safe, stimulating, and supervised activities during the times when they are most vulnerable to becoming victims of crime or to engaging in crime or other risky behaviors. Working families and law enforcement officials agree that children and youth benefit from quality afterschool programming.

## What is the Iowa Afterschool Alliance?

The Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA) is a statewide coalition of networks and interest groups who support, advocate, train, and work to advance afterschool and out-of-school time experiences which are meaningful and beneficial for children, youth, families, and communities. The IAA is a project of the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development and receives financial support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation Statewide Afterschool Network grant and the Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust.

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